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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the development of a practicum designed to recruit and support teacher candidates from one district through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification. Potential candidates had been isolated in their pursuit of certification because there were no support groups, courses, or manuals specifically developed for them. The practicum was designed to organize the district's National Board Certified teachers and the candidates so that equitable services were available to all. A Candidate Support Network was established. The Human Resources Development Department assigned candidates to mentors and then gathered and distributed resource material for all mentors to share with their candidates. Candidates met with their mentors in small groups and individual sessions. All mentors provided guidance and assistance by reading candidates' entries, reviewing videotapes, and giving feedback. Data analysis revealed that candidates who pursued National Board Certification reported that the Candidate Support Network effectively provided assistance which enabled them to complete the portfolio portion of their certification requirements. Mentors provided valuable guidance and support in study groups and individual conferences. The data showed that candidates who had a mentor who was certified in their area had more positive feedback about the Network than did those whose mentors were certified in other areas. (Contains 36 references and 3 appendices.) (SM)

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Developing a Network to Support Candidates Through the Process of Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards

by
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Cluster 81

A Practicum II Report Presented to the Ed.D. Program in
Child and Youth Studies in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Nova Southeastern University
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This practicum has been a labor of love generated by the teachers who are the heart of education. I applaud the dedication of the teachers in Broward County who were mentors and candidates for certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Their efforts to provide the best education for their students is truly admirable and they have been an inspiration for my own classroom practice. I would like to thank my adviser, Dr. Don Stanier, for his commitment to this project. I appreciate the many hours that were spent pouring over details as this idea evolved into a reality. I am grateful to the teachers and administrators in Broward County and throughout Florida for their advice, support, and encouragement. I also want to thank my husband, Howard, my children, Alyse and Michael, my mother, Ray Schindler, and my friends for their patience and guidance through this project. I have been blessed by having such a strong network of people who believed in me and my work, especially during the difficult times. Finally, I want to thank Timmy for always being by my side.

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Abstract

Developing an Effective Network to Recruit and Support Candidates Through the Process of Certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. Wolfson, Rona, 1999:Practicum Report, Nova Southeastern University, Ed.D. Program in Child and Youth Studies. National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certification/ Advanced Certification/ Professional Development/ Mentoring Networks/ Candidate Support/ Documenting Accomplished Teaching Practice.

This practicum was designed to develop a program to effectively recruit and support candidates for National Board Certification. Potential candidates had been isolated in their pursuit of certification because there were no support groups, courses, or manuals specifically developed for the teachers in this district. The purpose of this program was to organize the district's National Board Certified Teachers and the candidates so that equitable support services were available to all candidates.

A Candidate Support Network was established in the writer's district. The writer worked with the Human Resources Development department to assign candidates to mentors and then gathered and distributed resource material for all mentors to share with their candidates. Candidates met with their mentors in small group and individual sessions. All mentors provided guidance and assistance by reading candidates' entries, reviewing videotape, and giving feedback.

Analysis of the data revealed that candidates in the district who pursued National Board Certification reported that the Candidate Support Network effectively provided assistance that enabled them to complete the portfolio portion of their certification requirements. Mentors were able to provide valuable guidance and support in study groups and individual conferences. The data showed that candidates who had a mentor who was certified in their area had more positive feedback about the Candidate Support Network than the candidates whose support came from mentors certified in other areas.

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July 6, 1999 — Rona Wolfson

Chapter I: Introduction

Description of Community

This practicum took place in a culturally diverse public school system in the southeastern part of the United States. The population in the county is approximately 1,350,000 people. This district is one of the fastest growing districts in the nation with a unique urban / suburban mix of students. More than 10,000 new students enroll in grades K-12 each year. The current enrollment is over 223,000 multicultural / multiethnic students who come from 167 countries and speak 52 different languages. There are 47% White, 35% Black, 14% Hispanic, 3% Asian, and less than 1% Indian and multiracial students. Fourteen percent of the K-12 students have special needs and 35% of the children are from low income families. After school care is offered at over 150 sites for more than 20,000 school-age children. There are over 4,000 pre-K students and more than 240,000 adult students are enrolled in adult and community education.

Writer's Work Setting

This writer is a fifth grade teacher in a suburban elementary school that serves 978 of the district's students. The mission statement of this district is to "commit ourselves to a philosophy of respect and high expectations for all students (pre-kindergarten through adult), teachers and staff; and, with parent and community participation and partnerships, we will provide the process and support which will give our diverse, multicultural student population equal access to a quality education." One of the priorities of this school system is to attract, retain, and train the best teachers, principals, and support personnel. The school district employs approximately 12,000 teachers in 195 schools. The average experience of a teacher in this area is 12.5 years. Thirty-

seven percent of the teachers have advanced degrees.

Writer's Role

This writer is a fifth grade regular education teacher who has received certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the area of Early Adolescence / Generalist. There were only 289 participants who completed the initial field test for this certificate, and this writer was the only one in this state and one of only 81 nationally to receive certification. The author participated in the first standard-setting panel to recommend an operational performance standard to the National Board under the direction of the Psychological Corporation and The University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She participated in the first symposium for National Board Certified Teachers which included a White House reception hosted by President Clinton. The writer was trained by The Psychological Corporation and served as an assessor to score one of the assessment center exercises for the Early Adolescence / Generalist certificate. The writer participated in The National Board Academy to learn about candidate recruitment and support programs that promote the vision of accomplished teaching in schools throughout America. National Board Certified Teachers from this state and members of the state's Task Force on Teaching and the Future met for the Florida Teaching Profession - National Education Association (FTP-NEA) President's Symposium to discuss the recommendations of the Task Force.

This writer is a national trainer for the Center for the Teaching of Thinking and has trained hundreds of teachers nationally and presented at district, state, and national conferences. The author was on the writing team and is currently a workshop trainer for the district's Healthy

Children Learn Better interdisciplinary health curriculum as well as a consultant for this program to the state's Department of Education. She was a teacher-consultant on the design team for a local charter school. She believes that it is a personal responsibility to take a leadership role in the pioneering effort to introduce National Board Certification in this district.

Chapter II. Study of the Problem

Problem Statement

The problem to be solved in this practicum was that there was no program in this district to recruit and support candidates for National Board Certification.

Problem Description

There were many facets to the problem as it existed in this district. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards was born in 1987 as a result of the recommendation by the Carnegie Task Force on Teaching as a Profession to transform schools by strengthening the teaching profession. The Board adopted a vision of teaching that is described by five core propositions about what teachers should know and be able to do:

1. Teachers should be committed to students and their learning.
2. Teachers should know the subjects they teach and how to teach those subjects.
3. Teachers should be responsible for managing and monitoring student learning.
4. Teachers should think systematically about their practice and learn from experience.
5. Teachers should be members of learning communities.

The Board believes that teachers must be convinced that the standards developed from the core propositions should be incorporated into their daily instruction. Thirty-three certificate areas have been identified and standards are in development for each field. Standards are measured using complex, authentic assessments which give teachers a chance to demonstrate their practice and

the kinds of analysis and reflection they do daily.

Conversations with colleagues revealed that most teachers do not understand the commitment needed to complete the process for National Board Certification. The two components of the process are the school site portfolio and the assessment center exercises. After June 1, the school site portfolio was available to the candidates who completed an application and sent a deposit of $500. The balance of $1500 must have been submitted before January 31. The portfolio has six entries and includes narratives, student work samples, and videotapes of instruction and student interaction. The portfolio must have been completed and returned by April 16. The assessment center exercises complement the portfolio and provide an opportunity to demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities in the certificate field. Assessment centers are available for one full-day session during a three- to four-week window of time in the summer. There are four entries that are completed at the assessment center. Inquiries by colleagues about Board Certification revealed that there was little understanding that unlike state licensure, which is an entry-level requirement into the teaching profession, National Board Certification was developed by teachers, for teachers, to signify highly accomplished teaching based on rigorous professional criteria.

The National Board (1995) has identified five principles that must be adopted by any district to successfully encourage teachers to seek certification:

1. National Board Certification must be voluntary.
2. National Board Certification must be accessible to all eligible persons.
3. National Board Certification must be viewed not simply as an end in itself, but as a means for enhancing opportunities for teachers to continue to hone their

professional skills.

4. Processes leading to National Board Certification must stress equity and diversity.

5. Rewards and incentives which attach to National Board Certification must be appropriate and adequate. (p.2)

Although financial support for the Board's work comes from federal funds and grants from the nation's major private foundations and corporations, the fee to apply for certification is $2000. President Clinton's 1997 State of the Union Address included a budget proposal to enable 100,000 more teachers to seek the certification that will reward and recognize the nation's best teachers. This state's most recent legislation provided for funding and support for candidates seeking certification under the Excellent Teacher Act. Additionally, teachers who receive certification by the Board will be entitled to monetary incentives provided by the state. The new law allocated the funds but the system for accessing those funds was not developed. This district began an effort to support the Excellent Teacher Act, to promote the Board's work, and to comply with the 1996 recommendation of the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future to have 105,000 teachers certified in this decade, representing one for every school in the United States. Currently there are only ten Board Certified teachers in this district of over 12,000 teachers.

Potential candidates were isolated in their pursuit of certification because there were no support groups, courses, or manuals specifically developed for teachers in this district. Applying for certification was difficult for many teachers because they do not routinely maintain portfolios of their practice. Not all teachers satisfy the minimum criteria needed to apply for certification.

Teachers must have a baccalaureate degree, have taught for a minimum of three years, and have held a valid state teaching license for those three years. For the 1997-1998 school year, seven certificates were available, reaching about half of the nation's teaching population. Five additional certificate areas were added for the 1998-1999 school year.

Problem Documentation

There was evidence of the problem as it affected this district. Nationally, states and districts that provided support for National Board candidates had a greater number of teachers who completed the process than those areas without support systems. In 1996, over 150 teachers in this state began the process in Art and only 34 completed (23%), of which only 9 (26%) were certified. Of 705 teachers who completed the process in 1997, only 315 received certification (45%). In 1997, North Carolina, led by Governor James Hunt who was also Chairman of the National Board, had 207 Board Certified teachers, which was an increase of 88 certified teachers from the previous year. Mississippi's World Class Teaching Project recruited and supported 25 candidates in its first year and increased the total number of Board Certified teachers from 7 to 26. State support in Ohio resulted in an increase of 99 additional Board Certified teachers, bringing their total to 151 as of December 1997. Wisconsin offered no state or local support for candidates and has only one Board Certified teacher. This district has served as a field test site for three certificate areas but only has ten National Board Certified Teachers.

Of 12,000 teachers in this district, only four sought certification during the 1997-1998 school year. The local teachers' union and the Human Resource Development department have both publicized and conducted meetings for candidates. Only 11 people attended either of these

meetings, only one of whom applied for certification. One additional candidate was identified through personal contacts. This district has supported the work of the National Board by serving as a field test site for three certificate areas, but after five years there are only ten National Board Certified Teachers.

Publicized responses from candidates indicated that teachers who began the process often felt overwhelmed and isolated. Reports from candidates nationally and in this area showed that the process was arduous. Professional development activities in this district did not routinely include written narratives and reflections about a teacher's practice, although they would have helped to strengthen the profession. Because this district uses classroom observations for teacher evaluation, many teachers were unfamiliar with assembling professional portfolios. The National Board reported that teachers typically spend from 120 to over 300 hours assembling a portfolio and preparing for the assessment center exercises.

Causative Analysis

There are multiple causes for the problem of not offering support to candidates in this district. National Board Certification was a relatively new, voluntary system to assess and certify teachers who meet high and rigorous standards for what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do. Field test sites were used to recruit candidates in the initial year for the first six certificate areas, but the sites were replaced by pilot tests of individual portfolio exercises. This district served as a field test site for three different certificates. Teachers who volunteered to participate in the field test often had little vested interest or commitment beyond their time and effort. For the 1996 Art assessment in this state there was a loosely organized network of support

led by a former candidate who did not receive certification and therefore had diminished credibility.

Teachers who applied for certification often had difficulty showing how the standards were reflected in their practice. According to the education department chairmen at three local universities, preservice education courses did not specifically address the core propositions and standards of excellence developed by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. This district did not offer inservice or continuing education classes to assist teachers in understanding the standards.

Work for National Board Certification takes the better part of a school year. Teachers need to document the critical aspects of their teaching that support the standards and distinguish them as exemplary in their field. Videotapes and student work samples are required artifacts. They must be supported by commentaries that highlight the purpose of instruction, a reflection about what occurred and the effectiveness of the instruction, and a rationale for professional judgment. Assessment center exercises involve challenging teaching issues and candidates must demonstrate knowledge, skills, and abilities in specific situations. These tasks were often difficult for teachers because most teachers did not routinely maintain a portfolio of their practice. Most teachers were also not trained to use reflection skills to evaluate their practice.

In a large district like this one, awareness of teachers' needs and changes to meet those needs take a long time.

Relationship of the Problem to the Literature

Many areas were explored when trying to solve the complex problem of providing a

support network for candidates who pursue National Board Certification. Several researchers reported that the collegiality of a network is beneficial to success in preparing a portfolio and documenting accomplishments. Costa and Kallick (1993) reported that a critical friend can advocate for a teacher's success by setting the context for receiving a critique and gaining support for work that has been done. "A critical friend, as the name suggests, is a trusted person who asks provocative questions, provides data to be examined through another lens, and offers a critique of a person's work as a friend" (p. 50). Pennell and Firestone (1998) reported that there is a growing interest in professional development via teacher networks that are formed for a common purpose. It is their interaction that makes the meeting so meaningful and helpful. They noted that "educators have become increasingly disenchanted with the conventional training model for professional development - the model based on workshops in which experts tell teachers how to teach and then leave them to fend for themselves" (p. 354). Mitchell (1998) noted that leaders who are committed to mentorship view mentoring as part of their work, not as an additional burden. At the University of Maryland, University College (UMUC) members of the faculty can be nominated for rewards based on their portfolio. Kaplan and Millis (1995) reported that teachers have not been trained to document the teaching aspect of their work, especially their reflections. They studied the UMUC workshop that addresses portfolio development and found that many teachers select peer partners to collaborate with during their portfolio preparation. They said that "this reciprocal mentoring significantly increases the potential for completion of portfolios as well as the degree of personal satisfaction with the portfolio process and product" (p. 150). They found that as a result of the assistance, faculty members found that preparing a portfolio was not as daunting as they might have expected.

Other researchers have found that through documentation and reflective analysis, teachers gain insight into the complex process of student learning. French (1997) referred to two studies, one by the National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) and the other by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF), that described professional growth opportunities for teachers as limited and ineffective, especially because the school reform movement ignores that what teachers know and can do makes the critical difference in what children learn. Both reports indicated a need for teacher-initiated and directed learning to ultimately improve student learning. The National Board assessments fill that need by enabling teachers to examine their practice and determine what needs to be improved. French stated that professional development needs active participation. One-shot lectures delivered to all teachers are often passive and considered by teachers as irrelevant. Even college courses are superficial because they lack integration of content and the daily challenges. French continued that "a better model of continuous professional growth would allow individual teachers to critically examine their own classroom performance and discover ways to improve" (p. 40). This flexible model would not require set attendance, yet it would provide feedback and a way to measure performance against high standards developed by peers. The National Board provides opportunities for teachers to create the evidence of their knowledge and level of practice, and then reflect on and improve instruction skills. Shanker (1996) noted that to be considered a true profession, the occupation must have a distinct body of knowledge that is acknowledged by the practitioner and the public. For teaching to be recognized as a true profession, high and rigorous standards must be set and maintained, and practitioners must be evaluated according to those standards. "Teaching can be respected as a genuine profession when there is evidence that

teachers are experts in their subject matter and do a good job of inducting students into that expertise" (Shanker, p. 224). Buday and Kelly (1996) described the yearlong process for National Board Certification. They emphasized the focus on reflection and collaboration as candidates assess their impact on student learning. They said that the process is "a complex, collegial enterprise that is content-specific and requires deep knowledge and the exercise of expert judgment in the face of ambiguity and uncertainty" (p. 217). Darling-Hammond (1996) noted that recent efforts to improve education focus on knowledgeable, skillful teachers rather than textbook adoption and tests. She said that teachers discover that reflection about the standards of their practice drives an ongoing learning process. "Those who have access to teacher networks, enriched professional roles, and collegial work feel more efficacious in gaining the knowledge they need to meet the needs of their students and more positive about staying in the profession" (Darling-Hammond, p. 9).

Rotberg, Futrell, and Lieberman (1998) noted that although training and review materials are not available to assist teachers in preparation for certification, a support network is essential to learn the standards, review the subject matter and teaching methods, practice writing, and understand the assessment process. They reviewed candidate support programs at George Washington University and at Norfolk State University that were funded under a grant by the Pew Charitable Trust. Most teachers indicated that their preparation for National Board Certification was a strong professional development experience and a powerful learning experience. They noted, however, the relatively low participation and certification rates nationally and remarked that "the current lack of support services and training materials nationally further reduces teachers' incentives to participate and diminishes the likelihood of success" (p. 464).

Other researchers wrote about how good training can increase the odds that the skills, knowledge, and behavior learned in training can be transferred back to the classroom. Zemke and Gunkler (1985) found that specific steps for training preparation should include pretraining activities, good training with transfer-enhancing strategies and active participation, post training strategies, and then finessing strategies. Additionally, Parry (1986) found that good courses should run extensively over the whole year rather than intensively over a short time. Also, principals' roles should be made explicit.

The research of others indicated that great teachers never stop learning and that preparing for National Board Certification is a high-quality, professional development experience. Shapiro (1994) wrote that great teachers never stop being students, and continuing education is necessary for the refinement of practice and excellence in education. Preparing for National Board Certification is a self-directed, developmental opportunity for growth and change. He noted that there will likely be a constructivist effect on redesigning preservice teacher preparation programs to prepare new teachers to eventually meet the National Board's standards. He predicted that the knowledge base coming from the standards of what accomplished teachers should know and be able to do will become the core of teacher preparation programs. Draper (1998) was attracted to National Board Certification by a letter that promised to make teaching a profession instead of a job. She found that rather than an evaluator coming to her class, she was to evaluate herself. The required introspection was valuable and helped Draper to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses. She focused her thoughts about teaching in terms of what to teach, how to teach, how students learn, and if they do not learn, how to determine why not.

Driscoll and Lynton (1997) studied the challenging task of documenting service to the

profession. They found that the key is to realize that a portfolio is not just a collection of items, but rather it should tell a coherent story. The documentation must make the activities visible to the reader by using a narrative that is supported by artifacts like work samples or documents that profile evidence. Bruck (1997) stated that the goal of documenting professional accomplishments "is to show how your expertise makes you an accomplished teacher and a lifelong learner" (p. 58). The written documentation entry for the portfolio is comprised of both a professional vita and a written commentary. They both work together to document professional growth and showcase contributions to the profession as both a learner and a doer. The written commentary is the story that details the contributions to the profession.

Candidate support groups formed in other states report a collegial atmosphere that fosters favorable attitudes and confidence. Swoger and Fisher (1997) head The Mississippi World Class Teaching Program based on a program in New Mexico that selects 25 teachers for a mentoring group that engages candidates in yearlong inquiry into their practice as they build their portfolio for National Board Certification. Williams (1997) wrote that The Indiana Alliance for National Board Certification is a project designed to inform professional development programs for teachers. The North Carolina Center for the Advancement of Teaching (Simon-Hall and Garr, 1997) is dedicated exclusively to advancing the art and profession of teaching by providing a teacher-scholar-in-residence program for intellectual and creative renewal experiences. Pepperdine University (1997) offers a Master of Arts in Teaching as a Profession program that is aligned with the standards developed by the National Board. The Region 8 Education Service Agency for Northeast Indiana (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1997) is offering a yearlong pre-candidacy program for 30 selected teachers. The Arizona Education

Association (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1997) will offer a summer institute to prepare candidates and provide ongoing support. Center X at the University of California at Los Angeles (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1998) is offering study groups for National Board Certification candidates. The Chicago Teachers' Union Quest Center (National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1998) received a grant to provide professional development opportunities and financial support for 20 candidates.

Although professional networks are difficult to start, they offer a new way of meeting the challenges of educational reform. Pennell and Firestone (1998) reported that state-sponsored networks are a cost-effective way for teachers to share their expertise through mutually facilitated learning experiences. They found that teachers involved in network programs make longer-term and more intensive commitments. The networks addressed practical concerns more efficiently than university courses. Teachers in networks reported to Pennell and Firestone that "opportunities to share ideas and learn about colleagues' classroom-tested practices were highly rewarding and more useful than being 'talked at' by subject-matter experts or instructional specialists" (p. 355). Teacher networks provide an opportunity to take ideas, try them, reflect, and then fine-tune them. When led by a teacher, network meetings have credibility. Attending teachers felt that their needs were taken into account and their leader understood the complexity of classroom life. Lieberman and Grolnick (1996) researched teacher networks and found that traditionally teachers do not share their own expertise among themselves. In their study of 16 educational reform networks they found that networks were collaborative rather than individualistic, encouraged multiple perspectives, included integrated rather than fragmented work, and employed facilitated rather than directive leadership where participants were engaged

in governing and leading. A classroom teacher's experience was recognized as valuable and the teacher's knowledge and inquiries were validated. Lieberman and Grolnick concluded that networks "provide authentic examples of professional community built around shared work, shared interest, and shared struggle" (p.40). Rotberg, Futrell, and Lieberman (1998) found that although some universities and school systems are beginning to sponsor support workshops for candidates who apply for National Board Certification, review materials like those for business, law, or medical boards are not yet available.

The review of the literature indicates that National Board Certification is a powerful professional development experience. The certification process is complex and many teachers and administrators do not understand the commitment needed to complete the process. In this district candidates would benefit from the support of a network to learn the standards, to review the subject matter and pedagogy, to practice writing, and to understand the assessment process.

Chapter III. Anticipated Outcomes and Evaluation Instruments

Goals and Expectations

The goal for this practicum was for this district to have a program to effectively recruit and support candidates for National Board Certification.

Expected Outcomes

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. One-half of the teachers in this district who apply for certification will use the Candidate Support Network for assistance in completing the process.

2. At least 100 teachers will attend an information session for potential candidates and at least 12 will seek certification.

3. After completing their portfolio, 70% of the candidates from this district will respond positively to a survey item stating that the Candidate Support Network was necessary for their success.

4. Seven out of ten district personnel who oversee the Candidate Support Network will respond favorably to a survey item indicating that the network was necessary to implement the district's plan to increase the number of National Board Certified Teachers.

Measurement of Outcomes

Just as applying for National Board Certification is voluntary, so was using the Candidate Support Network (CSN). The CSN assisted candidates in group sessions and individual

meetings. Mentors documented the time spent assisting individual candidates and attendance records were maintained for group sessions. It was anticipated that seventy percent of the candidates from this district would use the CSN for at least ten hours. For the 1998-1999 school year, at least 100 teachers from this district were recruited to attend an information session for potential candidates, and at least 12 teachers were supported through the certification process. It was anticipated that at least 70% of the teachers who completed the portfolio phase of the process would report that they had valuable assistance from the Candidate Support Network and that it was necessary for their success (see Appendix A). A modified Likert scale survey was used to measure candidates' responses to the CSN. The SA (strongly agree - 5 points) and A (agree - 4 points) responses were added and it was anticipated that seventy percent of the candidates would have total scores of at least 40 points out of a possible total of 50 points. It was expected that seven out of ten district personnel who oversaw or participated in this project would report that the Candidate Support Network was necessary for the successful implementation of the district's plan to increase the number of National Board Certified Teachers (see Appendix B). These people completed a modified Likert scale survey about their reaction to the CSN. The SA (strongly agree - 5 points) and A (agree - 4 points) responses were added and it was expected that seven out of ten of the district personnel would have total scores of at least 20 out of a possible 25 points. Both of the surveys included open-ended questions about the strengths and weaknesses of the Candidate Support Network.

Chapter IV: Solution Strategy

Discussion and Evaluation of Solutions

The problem for this practicum was that there was no district program to recruit and support candidates for National Board Certification. The literature review included mentoring and critical friends, professional development for teachers, strengthening the teaching profession, written documentation of teaching and learning, professional service, teaching portfolios, the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, and training for adult learners.

The literature indicated a variety of solutions. Costa and Kallick (1993) and Kaplan and Millis (1995) encouraged the use of a critical friend as an advocate for a teacher's success. They noted that a key element is one-on-one consultation to share drafts of portfolios and receive suggestions for additional improvements. By building a relationship based on trust, both people know that a critique is an evaluation which may or may not be negative. The critical friend has the role of listening and clarifying ideas to ensure understanding. In this district it was helpful for candidates to have one advocate to share ideas, clarify understanding, and provide feedback. One-on-one assistance was provided through a Candidate Support Network.

Many researchers found that a support network was essential for learning the standards, studying a variety of assessments, practicing writing and videotaping, understanding the scoring process and assessment format, and reviewing subject matter, teaching methods, and developmental theory. Garmston and Wellman (1998) found that because humans are a social species, their most effective work is done in groups. They found that "in many schools, professionals who are charged with preparing students to be successful, collaborative citizens are

themselves cut off from the rich resources offered by true collegiality" (p. 34). Myers (1995) reported that although the National Board has not developed institutionalized methods for teachers to engage in collaborative work for certification, the Board does recommend that teachers work together on their portfolios. Heller (1993) found that teachers need to feel connected to and supported by a community of fellow teachers in order to offer that same sense of community to their students in the classroom. Networks help teachers make connections and learn that they are not alone, but rather a part of a group of professionals who struggle to make schools better. Heller also noted that network sessions should take place in a pleasant setting away from the school. He said that teachers reported that if they eat together and get stipends for participation, then the quality of the time spent together is improved and it will have a lasting impact. A journal article, "Make the Connection" (1996), reported that networks are gaining popularity because they offer motivation and support to improve teaching. Teachers in networks are treated as experts and they share and combine knowledge to create new ideas. Professional networks are learning communities led by and for teachers who have a common goal. "As explained in the National Board's standards, accomplished teachers are considered members of learning communities in which they work together to strengthen their teaching" (p. 58). The transformation from working alone to working and sharing with colleagues enhances professional growth. Sparks (1994) reported that the National Board's standards should be used as a guide for professional development. He suggested that districts encourage teachers to work together to assess themselves against the standards. District support should include released time, facilities for preparing and sharing videos, and resources to improve specific areas of practice. Sparks noted that "colleagues working together to solve real problems is a powerful form of staff development"

(p. 59). Teachers in this district had an awareness of National Board Certification and benefited from a support network. The ten National Board Certified Teachers in this area provided assistance for candidates through the Candidate Support Network.

Pennell and Firestone (1998) wrote about delivered programs with fixed agendas and constructed programs where the agendas are built by those in attendance. The delivered program format is what is mainly used in this district. There are few opportunities for experienced teachers to share their expertise through mutually facilitated learning activities. The Candidate Support Network began as a delivered program and developed into a constructed program to meet the needs of the candidates.

French (1997) and Draper (1998) indicated that teachers must be self-directed learners. French found that the process of applying for National Board Certification heightens the awareness of teaching knowledge by codifying the knowledge base that constitutes accomplished teaching. The professional development required for certification is a goal for novice teachers and a recognition for accomplished veteran teachers. Draper found that applying for certification was an overwhelming task, but the instructions were clear and the goals were understandable. Although there are numerous opportunities for one-shot inservice workshops, pursuing National Board Certification is a voluntary initiative in professional development. The feedback provided through the network helped candidates to measure their performance against high standards developed by peers.

Bruck (1997) and Wolf (1996) reported that written documentation needs a framework to support the vita and the written commentary. Wolf noted that portfolios can capture the complexities of professional practice. They can assess teacher quality and provide opportunities

for reflection and collegial interaction. Wolf believes that when carefully constructed and documented, a portfolio can go beyond a scrapbook collection and become an illustration of a philosophy of teaching that connects instructional goals with outcomes. The heart of the portfolio is the combination of teaching artifacts and written reflections. This intensive section is framed by background information and evidence of professional development. Bruck agreed that the documentation that accompanies the written commentary should be concrete evidence that serves as verification, and if it is unavailable, then someone who is familiar with the candidate's work should write a statement to support the commentary. Most teachers in this district lack skills for documenting their practice. Workshops were needed to identify critical components of the written documentation. Some teachers needed individual assistance in preparing the written sections of the portfolio.

Other researchers found that carefully collected and analyzed evidence of children's learning can provide insight into the complexity of the learning experience. Helm, Beneke, and Steinheimer (1997) found that a child's attitude toward learning can be monitored through documentation but not by test scores. They noted that "when teachers carefully collect, analyze, interpret, and display evidence of learning, they are better able to understand how children learn and to help others recognize that learning" (p. 200). They found that documentation informs teaching. Delandshere and Petrosky (1998) discussed methods of evaluation and found that using a scoring rubric to assign a numerical rating provides evidence of reliability and validity. The rubrics are placeholders or anchors for assessors who evaluate complex performances or tasks. Most student portfolios are just a collection of work samples. With guidance, candidates can produce quality documentation and interpretation of student portfolios that can merge theory and

practice to illustrate how children learn.

The mission of the National Board is to improve the quality of education across the nation by recognizing excellence in education. There are multiple paths by which a teacher can arrive at the endpoint of accomplished teaching. The reflection about instruction causes teachers to reconsider how they teach. The process of certification moves teachers toward a student-centered approach to instruction. The process is worthwhile because of its ability to transform teaching (Smagorinsky, 1995). Gitomer (1997) found that the National Board's assessment tasks are interpretations of standards that provide the common conceptual structure against which differences in performances can be measured. The assessor must make the connection between the evidence and the standards. The artifacts and the written commentary are the forms of evidence used to judge teaching quality. Shapiro (1994) noted that the National Board is "committed to the idea that a national certification system that articulates high and rigorous standards and reliably identifies teachers that meet them will galvanize the entire system" (p.42). The preservice teacher preparation programs in this area need to be redesigned to reflect the highest standards of professional practice. This practicum project only targeted veteran teachers who were seeking certification by the National Board.

Zemke and Gunkler (1985) studied training for adult learners. They found that good training has clear goals and objectives, participant action through verbalizing or practice, follow-up meetings to go over, refine, and polish skills, and a tracking system for progress. Parry (1986) identified techniques for increasing the transfer of the training. One key element was a critical incident sheet to report problems encountered. Another technique was to provide planning sheets, flow charts, checklists, and other job aids for the trainee to use. Both Parry and Zemke and

Gunkler included a brief overview of the training for the boss or the principal. A report about professional development ("Desperately Seeking Change," 1996) indicated that true professional development cannot happen in a one-day seminar where a diverse group of people are presented with information on a topic that is preselected. Teachers in this district expect good programs because considerable resources are allocated to designing programs to benefit teachers. Unlike most inservice workshops, the Candidate Support Network ran extensively over the entire school year.

Teachers of teachers have traditionally been those who earn doctorate degrees or those who become successful deliverers of inservice workshops. Recognition as an accomplished teacher should be a qualification for becoming a teacher educator. National Board Certified Teachers have proven that their teaching answers the question "What is good teaching?" It is certification as an expert in the field of teaching. The process ensures that certified teachers know how to analyze teaching, how to study teaching, and how to talk about teaching to others. These skills make a good teacher educator (Lampert, 1997). The credibility and the knowledge of skills and pedagogy that a certified teacher has are important for seminar leaders in the Candidate Support Network. Although teacher candidates guided the agenda of the network meetings, all meetings were led by a National Board Certified Teacher.

Additional solutions were generated by this writer after a review of the literature. Information sessions for prospective candidates included simulation activities for documenting practice. Teachers in this district were not familiar with choosing good evidence and reflecting upon their work. Simulation activities were necessary to reveal the complexity of the process. Teachers designed their own family outreach log that was appropriate and easy to use. There

currently are no district requirements for maintaining a contact log because conference forms are used to document parent contacts. The new contact logs were submitted as part of the portfolio entry that requires evidence of outreach to the family and community. An electronic mail address was available for candidates to get support from a National Board Certified Teacher. This online communication was available to teachers who have access to the district's local area network. An informational brochure was developed to advertise the National Board and the Candidate Support Network. It was difficult in this large district for information to reach all teachers. Brochures were written and sent to each school for distribution. The writer shared updates of initiatives by other districts and states with members of the School Board and the administrators of the Human Resource Development department.

Description of Selected Solutions and Report of Action Taken

For this practicum implementation, the writer used solutions taken from the research of others in combination with ideas that were generated as a result of reviewing the literature. A Candidate Support Network was established to recruit and assist teachers in incorporating the work of the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards into their practice. The state's Excellent Teacher Program provided the legislation that directed each district to accept and process applications. The Candidate Support Network was included as a support system provided through the district's Human Resource Development (HRD) department. The mentors tried to work together to provide services to the candidates, but there was no official policy that governed the organization or direction of the mentors. It was unanticipated but beneficial to have a clerical staff that could maintain the database for all of the candidates. The HRD absorbed the cost of

ordering demonstration portfolios for mentors to use with their candidates. Initially there were seven National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) who all agreed to join the support network. There were 73 candidates after the initial application deadline. The mentors met to assign candidates, but this was a difficult task. Some of the problems encountered were that the seven teachers were certified in only two areas but the candidates were applying in seven areas. Also, it was questionable whether to separate candidates according to the location of their school or their home. The same question arose for the mentors. Some NBCTs had already begun working with candidates and therefore wanted to maintain their groups. Finally, in November when new certified teachers were announced, the district proudly added three more teachers to the list and they all were eager to become mentors. They were assigned the 20 new candidates whose certification areas were available as of December, but that created the same problem as the support team had initially because the NBCTs were unfamiliar with those areas.

There was one general Saturday workshop sponsored by the state for orientation to the portfolio process and the types of writing required for the portfolio entries. It was a regional workshop that was attended by over 250 candidates from six districts. All of the NBCTs from this district volunteered to serve as speakers and small group leaders for the day. All subsequent meetings were arranged individually between the mentors and their candidates. There was one other general workshop session held after school for all district candidates to meet and discuss their progress, but it was not facilitated by any NBCT and therefore there were fewer than 12 teachers in attendance. A telephone assistance line and electronic mail system to either the clerical staff at HRD or to the mentors were available for candidates' use. Through the HRD office, future candidates had access to the standards documents for their certification area to help them

plan and prepare for the process.

General sessions were planned by mentors for candidates to practice skills necessary to be a successful National Board candidate. Candidates used simulations of portfolio entries, practiced incorporating standards into their writing, and analyzed student work samples as evidence of accomplished practice. There were activities to help candidates focus on the strengths of their students. Several sessions addressed the technicalities and requirements of videotaping. Producing an acceptable videotape was a difficult obstacle to overcome for many candidates. This writer contacted the district's instructional television department and arranged for a team of technical experts to use their equipment to videotape teachers in the classroom. The contact information was provided to all candidates through their mentors, and each candidate had the option to call and schedule a videotaping session.

The writer helped candidates form ongoing collaborative groups. They gave and received feedback about their entries. There were opportunities to discuss challenging teaching issues and the stages of child development to be incorporated into the narrative sections of the portfolio entries. The writer worked with two study groups and each formed a learning community. One group was self-directed and recruited guest speakers to discuss content before beginning the classroom entries The other group initially waited for direction from the writer, but soon found that they could direct their own sessions based on their collective needs.

The NBCTs had regularly scheduled meetings to discuss progress and concerns. This writer had been meeting with study groups before the candidates were assigned, so results of initial meetings were shared. The mentors were given several handouts and strategies that were useful to the candidates. These included research about child development, teacher portfolios,

"big ideas" in science, multiple intelligences, effective writing instruction for students, analytic and reflective writing for teachers, design and use of rubrics, parent and community involvement, and the Socratic method of discussion. This writer also shared a letter written to candidates' principals giving some background information about the process and suggesting some support that could be provided by the principal (see Appendix C). One goal of the NBCTs was to provide the candidates throughout the district with similar levels of support.

The formation of a Candidate Support Network was directed by the author. Candidates were matched to National Board Certified Teachers who became their advocates and provided guidance and support through the process. Individual coaching by NBCTs was available to candidates as needed on a one-to-one basis, through phone conferences, or in small group sessions. Advocates helped candidates interpret directions and terms used in certification materials. They asked guiding questions to trigger thinking and reflection by the candidate. The NBCTs provided information about key parts of tasks, suggested starting places, and gave realistic ideas of the time needed to complete the task. Mentors gave suggestions for videotaping. One of the most important and time-consuming jobs of the mentor was to read entries and review videotape and then provide useful feedback. Mentors kept logs of their time and most of them easily approached 150 hours of support. It should also be noted that most mentors were contacted by candidates throughout the state and provided additional support in varying amounts to other candidates. Three NBCTs participated in a full-day workshop for candidates in another district. Several NBCTs provided online assistance. Others met with individuals and small groups who were able to travel to this district for help. It is apparent that the 22 NBCTs in the state were insufficient to support over 1700 candidates. Most districts offered support in the form of

facilitating study groups led by curriculum experts, but the NBCTs have the first-hand knowledge and experience about a process that is rigorous and demanding for the whole year.

In preparation for new candidates for the 1999-2000 school year, the ten NBCTs in this district have scheduled orientation sessions in the spring for potential candidates. Each NBCT will lead a session for teachers from at least two geographical zones. It is important for candidates to understand that in addition to their commitment to the rigors of the process, there is a financial commitment to the state under the Excellent Teaching Program which provides fee support for candidates who complete the process. The mentors met to schedule dates for these sessions and to compile appropriate literature for the candidates. The dates and times for the orientation sessions were published in the district's professional development newsletter in addition to dissemination to all principals and inservice leaders at each school.

The proposed solution strategies led to the outcomes projected for this practicum. Candidates for National Board Certification from this district benefitted from the assistance of the Candidate Support Network. The initial awareness session was attended by over 200 potential candidates, and 93 candidates were supported as a result of this practicum project. At least seventy percent of the teachers who pursued certification reported that the Candidate Support Network was necessary for the successful completion of the portfolio phase of the process. Although only three of nine mentors who participated in this project reported that the Candidate Support Network was necessary for the successful implementation of the district's plan to increase the number of National Board Certified Teachers, all agreed with the statement that the Candidate Support Network provided the support that many candidates needed to complete the portfolio phase of the process.

Chapter V: Results

Results

The problem to be solved in this district was that there was no program to recruit and support candidates for National Board Certification. A Candidate Support Network was established to recruit and assist teachers as they engage in the year-long certification process. There was an initial orientation meeting for interested teachers. After the application period ended, there was a regional conference that focused on getting started with specific portfolio entries. Midway through the year there was a general networking workshop for all candidates. National Board Certified Teachers were assigned to candidates and became their advocates and mentors. These NBCTs helped candidates to form collaborative groups that met regularly. Individual coaching by NBCTs was available to candidates as needed. The goal for this program was to provide an effective support network for candidates.

The following outcomes were projected for this practicum:

1. One-half of the teachers in this district who apply for certification will use the Candidate Support Network for assistance in completing the process.

This outcome was met. All candidates were assigned to a NBCT as a mentor. Although the degree of participation in group sessions varied, almost all candidates received support from a NBCT. Of the 93 candidates in the district, 48 responded to the evaluation survey.

2. At least 100 teachers will attend an information session for potential candidates and at least 12 will seek certification.

This outcome was met. The orientation session was attended by over 200 teachers. There were 93 teachers who became candidates this year for National Board certification in this district.

3. After completing their portfolio, 70% of the candidates from this district will respond positively to a survey item stating that the Candidate Support Network was necessary for their success.

This outcome was met. The survey question that asked candidates if the support they received through the network was more than they could have gotten on their own scored an average of 4.34 out of 5 total points. A score of 4 indicated agreement with the survey question, and a 5 indicated strong agreement. The average score out of fifty possible points for the entire survey was 42.81.

4. Seven of ten district personnel who oversee the Candidate Support Network will respond favorably to a survey item indicating that the network was necessary to implement the district's plan to increase the number of National Board Certified Teachers.

This outcome was not met. Nine of the ten mentors responded to the evaluation survey. The district personnel who administered the Candidate Support Network did not respond. The statement that suggested that there would be more National Board Certified Teachers in the district because of the Candidate Support Network (question #5) was marked as uncertain on six of the responses and as strongly agree on the other three. The average score was 3.67 for this question and a 4 was needed to indicate agreement. However, all responses indicated agreement or strong agreement with the statement that the Candidate Support Network provided the support that was necessary for candidates to complete the portfolio phase of the process. The average score for all surveys was 20.56 of the maximum score of 25 (see Table 1 below). For this survey, 20 points indicated agreement.

Table 1

Administrators' Survey Results

	QUESTION					
MENTOR	1	2	3	4	5	TOTAL
A	2	4	4	4	3	17
B	4	5	5	5	3	22
C	2	4	4	4	3	17
D	5	4	4	4	3	20
E	4	4	4	4	3	19
F	5	5	3	4	5	22
G	4	5	5	5	5	24
H	5	4	4	4	3	20
I	4	5	5	5	5	24
TOTAL	35	40	38	39	33	185
AVERAGE	3.89	4.44	4.22	4.33	3.67	20.56

Discussion

The results of this practicum project explicitly show how one state's financial support for advanced certification has influenced so many teachers to carefully examine their practice and reflect upon their teaching and student learning. The results also clearly show that teachers need and want direction and guidance from a mentor as they embark on the journey of professional

development that leads to National Board certification. The Candidate Support Network is an important component for successfully recruiting teachers for advanced certification. As they work through the process, teachers want help to interpret the standards and how they apply in the classroom. Teachers need technical support to document their work. They also need a critical friend to share ideas and instructional decisions. A National Board Certified Teacher can become the mentor who can fill the role of this friend to provide guidance, emotional support, and professional opinions based upon personal experiences of going down the road to certification.

The individual survey responses revealed some consistent strengths and weaknesses of the support system. Many teachers found that their study groups allowed them the time and place to share concerns, ideas, and interpretations of the entries. "Getting new ideas for different sections," "Meeting others in my certification area," and "Being able to ask specific questions to our mentor" were remarks that indicated strong endorsement for the Candidate Support Network. One candidate commented that meetings "put me on track when I thought I had no clue as to what to do for an entry." Another common comment was that mentors were promptly assigned and they read entries and provided candid feedback. "Knowing I had a mentor to go to for support," and "Being able to communicate with my mentor" were commonly noted comments about the parts of the Candidate Support Network that were most helpful and effective. "The mentor looked at entries and provided clear, specific suggestions regarding the use of standards and language to strengthen each entry" was noted by one candidate. Candidates also stated that they felt like they could contact their mentor at any time for assistance.

The candidate responses to the survey question that asked what part of the CSN should be omitted in the future was limited. Most candidates could not identify any areas to omit, but one

event listed was the candidates-only meeting that was set up for networking purposes. "Grouping people who are clueless without a knowledgeable leader is a waste of time," and "The candidates just sat together and talked. We needed guidance, not more confusion" were examples of responses that related to the poorly planned and poorly attended group session. That meeting was planned by the Human Resource Development department to provide the opportunity for candidates to meet and network. The National Board suggests that candidates meet to work together through the entries, but it was obvious that the meeting needed direction and a clear focus.

It is also difficult to satisfy so many people with diverse certification areas. Comments that related to discontent with the mentor were "I realize that some areas are new, however coaches should be somewhat similarly versed to their candidates," and "It was difficult because my mentor was not middle childhood. She tried but could not give me specific help in my area." This was one weakness of the network that could not be avoided because the resource pool of certified mentors represented only four different certificate areas.

Although the mentors were uncertain about attributing a probable increase in the number of National Board Certified Teachers to the Candidate Support Network, they were all in agreement with statements that indicated prompt assignment of mentors to candidates, support for professional growth that candidates received from individual and group sessions, and support that was necessary for completion of the process. The uncertainly about the number of candidates who become NBCTs is most likely related to participation that resulted from the state's financial support and incentives rather than from the availability of assistance with the process. The state's Excellent Teacher Program is directly responsible for the increase in the number of teachers who

sought certification this year. The support provided by mentors might affect the number of candidates who become certified, but the number of teachers who become candidates is affected by the available financial support.

As with the candidates' surveys, the administrators' surveys revealed some strengths and weaknesses of the program. Among the strengths were the availability of mentors with a genuine caring attitude. One mentor mentioned that having "a method of organizing mentors and candidates was a major plus," while another noted that "planning and implementation in such a short time frame" was a strength of the network. The weaknesses noted were that "candidates didn't have support from people in their field," and there were "too many subject areas for one mentor to deal with effectively." Mentors also commented that the Human Resource Development administrators of the program were not NBCTs and had no training from the National Board. Another mentor commented that there was a "lack of background about the National Board process by the HRD staff / administration." This viewpoint was repeated by another mentor who stated that "those in charge of the program do not totally understand the process of National certification." It was also noted that the district "should have provided specialized mentoring / facilitator training for the mentors prior to assigning candidates." The mentors were eager to be critical of the Candidate Support Network in an effort to improve its effectiveness. They noted that "this was a pilot - a learning experience - we'll adjust and become better as we progress," and "I think candidates received excellent support."

An analysis of the surveys reveals that candidates from 11 different certificate areas responded. Of those, only five areas averaged scores lower than the acceptable score of 40 points. All five of those areas were for certificates that were not represented by NBCTs in the district. It

seems that the candidates who did not have a mentor in their area were less satisfied with the support network than those who had support from NBCTs who held certificates in the same area. The two certificates offered in Art had average scores of 44 and 45. The three certificates offered in the Generalist areas had average scores of 43, 43.2, and 44.3. Other certificate areas had average scores that ranged from 32 to 39 points. The only other favorable score was from the lone candidate in Early Adolescence / Math whose total score was 48 points. This data makes a strong statement about providing candidate support from a NBCT in the same area as their certification.

On February 16, Secretary of Education Richard W. Riley urged states to support his new three-tiered plan to improve teacher quality (Robelen, 1999). This proposal includes licensure at three stages: initial, professional, and voluntary advanced. The advanced license would be the certification now granted by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards that attests to teachers' accomplished practice and the ability to make sound professional judgments about student learning. The proposal urges states to consider teachers' pay based upon the type of license held. Local, state, and federal policymakers are tuned in to Secretary Riley's plan as they work to improve teacher quality at their levels. Advanced certification is part of the career continuum for accomplished teachers who have been identified by their peers. For many, it is the critical step in their quest for meeting high standards. States and districts that provide financial and professional support are taking an important step toward improving services to educate the nation's children.

Recommendations

A Candidate Support Network should be established in each district to provide structured

support for teachers seeking advanced certification. The requirements for becoming a mentor, however, need to be more than having just attained National Board certification. Some candidates in this project did not receive adequate support. One candidate noted that her mentor was not flexible and "did not review the different standards in order to provide guidance. I also found asking my mentor for assistance to be a discouraging process." The mentors must be committed to providing detailed support services for their candidates. Mentor training programs should be developed to ensure that all mentors have the same foundation. They need to become thoroughly familiar with the standards and the portfolio entries for their candidates. They should schedule meetings to accommodate the needs of their group. Mentors also must be dedicated to reading written work, viewing videotapes, and providing meaningful feedback. This job takes many hours beyond a regular teacher's day. The time must be available and given willingly. The following candidates' comments emphasize the importance of the commitment of the mentors to their candidates:

"I could not have expected any more assistance from my mentor. She gave me more support than I would have thought possible."

"The support that I have received has been excellent."

"My mentor is kind, supportive, and available to discuss the many decisions I had to make."

"I felt that my mentor was very supportive and willing to give her time and expertise freely and was quite flexible."

"My mentor has done everything possible to assist me and keep the lines of communication open."

"I truly appreciate the hours of attention my mentor provided. I could not have completed the process without her support."

"I could absolutely not have gotten through this process without this support group or my mentor."

As compensation for providing this valuable service to the profession, mentors should receive appropriate pay and professional release time as needed.

In addition to providing strong support from mentors, candidates need district support with technical and clerical tasks. Centers should be established for collaboration, copying entries, and editing videotapes. There should also be a professional library available for all candidates and mentors to use for resources about content and pedagogy. The district should provide video cameras with quality microphones for candidates' use. Candidates have also noted the importance of professional days that can be used for writing and revising their work. Additionally, the district should recognize all candidates who complete the process as having taken a giant step forward in their professional development. It is unwise to wait for the results and then just reward the certified teachers. All candidates who complete the process deserve applause for their individual accomplishment. A celebration is certainly in order! Finally, there must be some vehicle in place to guide those candidates who do not earn certification during their first try and choose to bank their scores and continue the pursuit of the National certification. The support given to "veteran" candidates will have to be different and separate from the support provided to new candidates. They will need significant feedback about their initial entries and guidance to understand and demonstrate the standards in their practice.

Dissemination

The results of this practicum will be shared with the Director of Instructional Zone Support from the district's Human Resource Development department. She is the current administrator who is responsible for compliance with the state's Excellent Teacher Program that supports National Board certification. The same department also oversees the county's Guild of Teachers. It is through the Guild that the Candidate Support Network will emerge as a recognized organization in the district. This writer will chair the committee to draft operating standards that define guidelines for mentors' services. The plan will also include provisions for assistance to candidates who do not pass all requirements for certification this year and want to bank their scores and continue the process.

Throughout this year, the Candidate Support Network has informally served as a model for other districts. Many of the ten mentors have been guest speakers in other districts at conferences and meetings. The results of this project will be shared as requested by other districts as they embark on establishing their own support networks.

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APPENDIX A

NATIONAL BOARD CANDIDATE SURVEY

M E M O R A N D U M

To: National Board Candidates

From: Rona Wolfson, NBCT

Date: March 13, 1999

Congratulations on getting this far on your work for National Board Certification. I know the timing is bad, but I really need your help. After I was certified by the National Board in 1994, I received a scholarship from Nova Southeastern University for their doctoral program. I am currently completing my applied dissertation about the effectiveness of having a Candidate Support Network for teachers who are pursuing certification. We are fortunate in our county to have 10 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) who have been mentors to many of our district's candidates. Please take a few minutes to complete the attached survey and then return it via the pony to me at Nob Hill Elementary School. I know that many of you are overwhelmed with so much to do, but as my mom always said, "If you want a job done, give it to a busy person."

Thank you so much for helping to make this process easier for future candidates. Please note that this survey is not an evaluation of the people or the program connected to the district's Human Resource Department. This is a voluntary survey and even your name is optional.

Good luck to all of you as you proceed through this process. As always, if you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me at school (572-1240), at home (741-4845), or by email (Rhw11@aol.com).

NATIONAL BOARD CANDIDATE SURVEY

Read each statement and decide to what extent you agree or disagree with that statement. Circle SA if you strongly agree, or A if you agree, or U if you are uncertain, or D if you disagree, or SD if you strongly disagree. Give your immediate or first reaction to each statement. Please answer all questions.

1. The Candidate Support Network promptly assigned a National Board Certified Teacher as my mentor.	SA	A	U	D	SD
2. I was satisfied with the individual attention that I received from my mentor.	SA	A	U	D	SD
3. The Candidate Support Network helped to guide my professional development as I completed the portfolio process.	SA	A	U	D	SD
4. I feel that the help that I received from the Candidate Support Network was more than I could have gotten on my own.	SA	A	U	D	SD
5. The first session with a mentor helped me to understand the language of the portfolio entries.	SA	A	U	D	SD
6. My mentor helped me to see how the standards are incorporated into the narrative portion of the portfolio entries.	SA	A	U	D	SD
7. My mentor helped me to understand the two entries for documented accomplishments.. Overall I think the group sessions were helpful.	SA	A	U	D	SD
8. Overall I think the group sessions were helpful.	SA	A	U	D	SD
9. The Candidate Support Network helped me promote my own personal support network with other candidates.	SA	A	U	D	SD
10. Although I did not fully understand the commitment involved in applying for National Board certification, the orientation session was a beneficial first step to understanding the process.	SA	A	U	D	SD

What parts of the Candidate Support Network were most helpful and effective?

What parts of the Candidate Support Network would you omit for future candidates?

Now that your portfolio is almost completed, what other support from your mentor would have been beneficial?

Please add any additional comments.

APPENDIX B

CANDIDATE SUPPORT NETWORK ADMINISTRATORS' SURVEY

MEMORANDUM

To: National Board Certified Teachers

Support Personnel for National Board Candidates

From: Rona Wolfson, NBCT

Date: March 13, 1999

Congratulations on helping our district's candidates get this far on their work for National Board Certification. I know the timing is bad, but I really need your help. I am a doctoral student at Nova Southeastern University. I am currently completing my applied dissertation about the effectiveness of having a Candidate Support Network for teachers who are pursuing certification. We are fortunate in our county to have 10 National Board Certified Teachers (NBCT) who have been mentors to many of our district's candidates. Please take a few minutes to complete the attached survey and then return it via the pony to me at Nob Hill Elementary School. I know that many of you are overwhelmed with so much to do, but as my mom always said, "If you want a job done, give it to a busy person."

Thank you so much for helping to make this process easier for future candidates. Please note that this survey is not an evaluation of the people or the program connected to the district's Human Resource Department. This is a voluntary survey and even your name is optional.

Thank you for your time and your help. As always, if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at school (572-1240), at home (741-4845), or by email (Rhw11@aol.com).

Name_____

Your role in providing candidate support_____

If applicable, number of candidates supported_____

number of contact hours_____

CANDIDATE SUPPORT NETWORK ADMINISTRATORS' SURVEY

Read each statement and decide to what extent you agree or disagree with that statement. Circle SA if you strongly agree. or A if you agree, or U if you are uncertain, or D if you disagree, or SD if you strongly disagree. Give your immediate or first reaction to each statement. Please answer all questions.

1. Having a Candidate Support Network was instrumental in successfully recruiting candidates for National Board certification in this district.	SA	A	U	D	SD
2. The Candidate Support Network promptly assigned mentors to candidates.	SA	A	U	D	SD
3. The candidates in this district got support in both group and individual sessions that was beneficial to their professional growth.	SA	A	U	D	SD
4. The Candidate Support Network provided the support that many candidates needed to complete the portfolio phase of the process.	SA	A	U	D	SD
5. Because of the Candidate Support Network, this district will have more National Board Certified Teachers than it would have had without the network.	SA	A	U	D	SD

One strong feature of the network was:

One weak feature of the network was:

What other support from mentors would have been beneficial for candidates?

Comments:

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO CANDIDATES' ADMINISTRATORS

December 18,1998

TO: Principal

Nob Hill Elementary School

FROM: Rona Wolfson, NBCT

Nob Hill Elementary School

RE: Candidates for National Board Certification

I am a National Board Certified Teacher working as a mentor for candidates from your school who are currently seeking certification by the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. These teachers have committed to a yearlong process. The 1998 Florida Legislature passed The Excellent Teacher Act which supports candidates for National Board certification by paying $1800 of the $2000 fee along with an additional $150 for portfolio expenses. In exchange, teachers who agree to seek certification must complete the process and then teach in Florida for one year. Teachers who are certified will earn a supplement equal to 10% of the average Florida teachers' salary. There is an additional 10% available for certified teachers who mentor other teachers. The district also gets a percentage of the bonus money. The teachers' contract has a provision for a $2000 annual supplement for the life of the certificate. The monetary rewards are substantial, but the personal satisfaction, professional growth, and pride are the motivating forces for most candidates. The National Board has established a banking policy so scores can be saved and part can be completed again if they did not meet the standards. Currently the national rate for passing is just under 40%.

This is a very difficult process that involves a portfolio to document accomplishments and excellent teaching practices in the classroom, followed by a full day's work at an assessment center during the summer. The school-site preparation includes two videotaped lessons and two entries that show the teacher's instructional planning, delivery of the lesson, student work samples with feedback, assessment, and analysis and reflection for follow-up lessons. The process requires considerable time as the teacher tries to demonstrate clear, convincing, and consistent evidence of accomplished teaching practice.

Your role as the school's administrator could be supportive to your teachers in several ways:

** offer to read and critique entries

** provide access to technical equipment for home use (laptop computer, printer, VCR, video camera)

** offer assistance with videotaping

** make allowances for extra duties

** provide release time for writing or reviewing entries and videotapes

** listen

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards can change the education profession by recognizing world-class teachers and keeping them in the classroom. If you have any questions about this process or would like to attend a study group meeting, please contact me at 572-1240 or through the district's email system.